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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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A-ONE #0128

09/10/99

~ Dreamcast Scores Big! ~ People Are Talking! ~ PSX2 Delayed?
~ Free(?) Printers!?! ~ 9/9/99 Bug Fizzles! ~ AVC Meeting News

~ Final Fantasy VIII Out ~ Mortal Kombat Gold! ~ Blue Stinger!
~ Mad Magazine Goes CD! ~ PCs Versus Consoles! ~ Hydro Thunder!

- * VM Labs & Spyglass Team Up! *-
- * Microsoft To Introduce X-Top Game Console? *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard
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"Saying it like it is!"

I hope that everyone who celebrated Labor Day had a safe and terrific long holiday weekend. It's still hard to believe that the summer is unofficially over! Especially with this muggy weather we've had all week up here in New England!

Atari-wise and computer technology news has been sparse this past week other than the usual boring buyouts and stock reports. I'm sure that things will pick up once company vacations end and everyone ramps up for the new fiscal year.

Me, it's back to work and getting back into the swing of things. I'm still cleaning up the backlog of work that piled up while trying to keep all of the rest of things status quo! Some things just never seem to change. So, I'll be brief and let everyone get back to reality now that the seasons are about to change and we adapt once again!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors.

Well, I'm giving the old "use the new PC for writing your column" thing another go. I think I've got most of the kinks worked out now, but it's so hard to be sure when you're dealing with PCs.

Yes, I do still have an Atari computer or two (or ten) around, and my TT is still the workhorse within these walls, but I'm looking toward the day when the last of my spare parts has been used and whichever of my Atari machines is left flips it's last gate and joins the others in sweet oblivion.

What will I do then? Perhaps by then computer manufacturers will have come up with a more usable interface than what is popular now, and capturing newsgroup posts will be as easy to do as it was with my ST and a little program called NEWSie....

Naaaahhhhh... never happen.

And for you folks who have a PC or Mac and use ICQ, Rob Mahlert has set up an "Active List" dedicated to Atari computers. You can find it

through ICQ by searching for either the list number (48712296) or using Atari as a keyword. It's an interesting idea, this Active List setup. Think of it as a combination of a NewsGroup, Chatroom, and easily send and receive URLs and such. Take a look at it and join up!

Well, let's give this new-fangled PC another shot, shall we?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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On the subject of Atari's port of Unix for the TT, Nicholas Bales asks:

"Was it actually released ? It was vapourware for quite a long time, and I have seen packages of Atari System V, but I'm not sure it was actually officially released."

Ronald van der Kamp tells Nick:

"Yes it was. I remember a visit to Atari Benelux in Vianen Netherlands special organised to bring the TT with Unix on the market. But the demo was a disaster: no network, no X11, only basics, no knowledge. Real info on paper came later especially about VME-bus. Price was euro 1300 for Unix alone and a TT had to be 'fixed' internally to perform. In those days that was cheap but for the workplaces where they use Unix price is not a problem, incompatibility and no support are."

Dr. Uwe Seimet adds:

"The final version worked fine regarding network and X11. It didn't simply feature X11R5 but also Motif 1.1. I used this version for several years and it worked fine. Today Linux is a better choice, of course."

On the subject of why we need HSModem, Nick Bales posts:

"...Even if you don't use STinG, HSModem is a must have for any serial port communication."

Peter Slegg adds his thoughts on the subject:

"Many Atari users no longer use plain TOS but prefer Magic or Mint with N.AES and a replacement desktop, why then do we still need so many patches like HS-Modem ? Isn't it time they were consolidated into the OS?"

Ekkehard Flessa tells Peter:

"For N.AES (say: MiNT), this integration is under way. There is a new program available on Frank Naumanns web site that is supposed to make HSMODEM obsolete. Sadly, it is not perfect yet."

Mark Friedman asks:

"Where can I get these Doom "wads" now that I have downloaded the port of Doom by Patrice?"

Daniel Dreibelbis tells Mark:

"You may want to try over at www.doomworld.com, this is where news of new WADS and where to download them are.

And now a question - will the new Batman Doom WAD work with this? It sounds like it may require a Milan or Hades, or at least an accelerated Falcon to try this one..."

James Haslam tells Daniel and Mark:

"As far as I'm aware only a few WADs work, basically (for Doom at least) the original id Software WADs such as the shareware and registered versions. I think there's a list of them in the documentation.

I got hold of the shareware WAD for Doom on the official id Software site, it's an FTP archive of them.

The address is: <http://www.idsoftware.com/>"

Anthony Jacques adds:

"Doom et al were designed to be extended. There are two types of WAD - IWAD and PWAD. IWADs are the "ID" wads which are the ones you mention, while PWADS (patch wads) are "addons" which include new levels and maybe a few other extra new things... To play, you must have an IWAD, and may have multiple PWADS (these are specified on the command line with -file IIRC).

doom.wad doom2.wad plutonia.wad heretic.wad and all the rest (there are actually quite a few of these) are IWADs. I don't see why these shouldn't work, as the doom source code does include support for Final Doom, Ultimate Doom, etc. The Heretic and Hexen ones need the heretic modified binaries of course, but that's not a problem as they are released as well. Doom detects which wad it's using (cannot remember the search order) so unless PM has modified this functionality, you'll have to move the wads in and out of the doom directory to play the different games.

There are lots of PWADS out there - I'm sure there are still lots on ftp.cdrom.com and I'm sure they will work with the Atari ports as long as nothing has been broken... oh... and in some releases of Doom you needed a "registered" IWAD for the -file command line to work, not sure whether that check is in the pmdoom version. Even if the check has been removed, they may require textures from the registered wads, so it's best to get those if you can.

The "new" wads mentioned earlier in the thread may only work with modified versions of Doom like Zdoom (PC people are adding lots of things to it which will not work on our "old" ports).

Oh, and I forgot to mention that Atari users who would like to make their own PWADS can use GEM-DEU to edit levels, and FWT is available for general wad maintenance/viewing.

GEM-DEU can be found here:
<http://www.btinternet.com/~AnthonyJ/gem-deu.html>

FWT can be found here:
<http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/dmurphy/>

The Bad Mood homepage at
<http://rand.thn.htu.se/>

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->In This Week's Gaming Section
  - Playstation 2 To Be Delayed?
  - Dreamcast Is Here!  PC vs. Console!
  - 'Final Fantasy VIII'!
  - 'Hydro Thunder'!  And much more!

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->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!
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The news this week is obviously the release of the Dreamcast. From what I've been reading, the reaction - sales and reviews - has been varied. The usual "I gotta be the first to get one" sales occurred, but many seem to be taking a "wait and see" attitude. I'm sure that within the next few days, the reactions and sales will pick up. We'll be here to keep you posted on how the Dreamcast makes out.

While we're on the subject of new game consoles, apparently Sony is delaying its launch of the PlayStation 2 until early spring. I figure it's better to do it right and a little late, than to rush out a small production run. I don't think that the Dreamcast is going to hurt PSX 2 sales with any real significance anyway. Also, there are rumors of Microsoft's "X-Box" console! All of the current and available news of these items is included in this week's issue. Hope you stay tuned!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Sega Ready For Its Biggest Stakes Game

Last month, Sega of America flew a plane with a banner advertising its Dreamcast console at tee time over a golf tournament sponsored by rival Sony Computer Entertainment America, while Sega's mascot Sonic the Hedgehog roamed the course in a golf cart.

Peter Moore, senior vice president of marketing for Sega of America tells the story with glee, adding that while the Sony executives smiled a little, the third party software developers and distributors loved Sega's brashness.

"We are no pushover," Moore said in an interview at the U.S. arm of Sega Enterprises Ltd. in San Francisco's Multimedia Gulch. "We are a smaller company, very focused on who we are ... They (No. 1 Sony) don't take us seriously. When you start dismissing people, the happier I am."

Indeed, Sega the underdog -- with barely a No. 3 position in the \$6.3 billion video game industry -- is aiming to prove it is a force to be reckoned with, as it prepares for its highest stakes game yet, with the launch of the Dreamcast.

On Sept. 9, the Dreamcast, Sega's next generation video game system, the first 128-bit console and the first to have built-in Internet access, will hit retail stores. Sega is spending \$100 million on marketing, including

sponsoring the MTV Video Music Awards and midnight madness events at retailers in five cities around the United States.

“I think it’s going to go very well,” said Sean McGowan, an analyst with Gerard Klauer Mattison & Co. “They have certainly sold more than I thought they would ... Everything that could go right is going right. A year ago, you would have bet that Sega wouldn’t get this far.”

Sega has received 300,000 pre-orders for Dreamcast, which will retail at \$199, surpassing the initial pre-orders for Sony Corp.’s PlayStation. The company also now has 18 gaming titles at launch, a key ingredient that it hopes will help it prevent some of its past mistakes.

Its much-touted launch in Japan last year was lacking in software titles, and sales have underperformed. In April, Sega reported a \$378 million loss for the year ended March 31. Sales of the Dreamcast in Japan fell short of expectations and were not enough to help the company out of the red.

But for now, the Dreamcast has a one-year head start before next generation systems come to the United States from both Sony and No. 2 console maker Nintendo Co. Ltd., in time for the holiday shopping season of 2000.

“The only thing that will draw attention away from it is when Sony announces the PlayStation 2 in Japan,” John Davison, editor-in-chief of Electronic Gaming Monthly, said.

Davison was referring to Sony’s plans to make an announcement before a big Tokyo gaming show on Sept. 13, to unveil pricing, the availability date and the name of its new system, which is currently referred to as PlayStation 2.

Sony and Nintendo both cut the prices on their older systems to \$99, as they prepared their own marketing attacks against the Dreamcast system, which boasts faster graphics and more lifelike movements, which can be seen by the players in the football game Sega NFL 2K and the basketball game, NBA 2K.

But even with 18 titles at launch, like Sonic Adventure, a super fast game that has the famous hedgehog racing through worlds of ice, mystic ruins and casinos, the Dreamcast faces formidable competition from the dominant Sony.

Sony is making its new system “backwards compatible” so that all the current Sony games will run on its new system. And the new PlayStation, which has a chip called the Emotion Engine, has gotten rave reviews for its graphics, most recently after a demo for chip designers at a technical semiconductor conference at Stanford University last month.

While most analysts believe Sony will stay on top, a successful launch of Dreamcast in the United States could restore Sega and get it back in the video game market, where it has mostly been absent since the 1995 flop of the Sega Saturn.

“If Dreamcast fails miserably, it could really hurt the company,” McGowan said. “If it succeeds wildly, it will give them something to compete with in the next few years.”

The feisty Sega, however, points out that a company in the gaming industry can easily jump from No. 1 to a has-been.

“You can be a leader one day and yesterday’s news the next,” Moore said.

“We were once 50 percent of the market,” he added, referring to Sega’s reign with its Genesis system in the early 1990s.

“Sega is purely a gaming company,” Moore said. “We don’t have some dark plan to rule your living room ... We want to reconnect with the hard core gamer.”

“Their attitude is perfect,” Electronic Gaming Monthly’s Davison said. “They want the 17-year-old boys. That is the market to start with. They are not messing around with anyone else. Once they have got that market sewn up, they will look elsewhere.”

Sega’s Dreamcast Holds Video Game Hi Score For Now

Video gamers across North America flexed their fingers Thursday as Sega of America Inc. introduced its Dreamcast videogame console, primed with 300,000 pre-orders for the system, which is expected to become the fall season’s hot-seller.

Sega predicted the much anticipated game system, built on the latest 128-bit computer chip technology, would generate sales of \$45 million on the first day of its release.

The Dreamcast system gives Sega at least a temporary lead over Sony Corp. and Nintendo Co. Ltd., which have stomped Sega in the 64-bit video system market, but are not expected to release their own next-generation games in the United States until next fall.

“Looking at consumer demand, this looks to be one of the most significant consumer products ever sold through retail channels in the United States,” said financial analyst Lewis Alton of L.H. Alton & Co. of San Francisco, who tracks video game makers.

The Internet-ready Dreamcast system was made available at more than 15,000 retail locations across the U.S. and Canada for a suggested price of \$199. Sega said it plans to support the new console with a \$100 million marketing campaign.

Sega said tens of thousands of the consoles arrived at stores, some of which opened at midnight to court the most avid Dreamcast buyers. Consumer electronics stores in Manhattan said there was steady demand throughout the day.

“People have been coming in all day to ask about it,” said a cashier at The Wiz in Manhattan. “We’ve sold 10 today at this store, but most people will come buy them on their way home from work.”

The game console is more powerful than any other gaming system, four times more powerful than an Intel Corp. Pentium II processor, and several times more powerful than the Sony Corp.’s current Playstation, the company said.

“That means the games run faster and it has more realistic graphics,” said spokeswoman Jennifer Walker. “On the football game you can see their breath when they are playing on a cold day, and the divots on the field.”

The system also includes a modem, which allows gamers to play online with other players, and post messages about the tricks on how to play.

Analysts said the game console was certainly the most advanced on the market, but that despite initial demand, long-term success was not a given.

“There is no question what will happen today or tomorrow, but before we call this an unequivocal success we need to know if after that they will sit in the stores,” said Alton.

But even if Dreamcast continues to win the high score from consumers, Sony and Nintendo still have their turn next year.

“It should put focus on new machines coming next year from Sony and Nintendo,” Michael Wallace, a software analyst at brokerage Warburg Dillon Read, wrote in a note to investors Thursday.

“We also believe that Microsoft Corp. could be entering the market next year with a low-priced console machine,” he said.

Microsoft declined to comment on the development of the rumored “X-Box” console expected by analysts. “The X-Box is a rumor and we don’t comment on rumors,” Microsoft spokeswoman Joy Nester said.

“Sega has a year, and then two or maybe three players will be coming after them,” Wallace said.

Dreamcast 1st Day Sales Seem Strong

Sega’s powerful new Dreamcast system flew out of stores Thursday as fans, eager for the latest in video gaming, snapped up machines the struggling company hopes will return it to prominence.

First-day sales figures will not be available until Friday. But the company, which laid off about 1,000 employees and lost \$400 million in its last fiscal year, says it is happy with early reports from retailers. More than 300,000 systems were presold.

“Judging by last night, things are going phenomenal,” said Sega spokesman Chase, who uses only his last name.

A dramatic turnaround will not be easy. Dreamcast’s two rivals, Sony and Nintendo, have entrenched systems on the market, and offer far more games than the 16 on shelves so far for the CD-based Dreamcast.

Things don’t get any easier. Both rivals will release next-generation systems next year. Although Nintendo must come up with all new games for its switch from the N64’s cartridge format to a CD-based system, Sony will continue to use CDs for PlayStation II, allowing existing games to work with the upcoming machine.

The early word on Dreamcast from retailers was mostly positive.

“It’s selling very strong, extremely strong,” said Noah Garden, director of product marketing for online retailer Outpost.com. “They’re moving out like fire, way above and beyond our expectations.”

“We got 176 units, and all of them were reserved,” said Roseanne Disandro, director of a Toys R Us store in Redwood City, 20 miles south of

San Francisco. "The disappointment level was pretty high" for those tried to buy without a reservation.

The picture wasn't all rosy for Sega.

Ken Jones, manager of Funcoland in Issaquah, Wash., a Seattle suburb, said the store took 50 to 60 reservations, less than the 100 to 150 he hoped for. The store opened at midnight and sold 13 more, plus another couple after opening for business Thursday morning.

"Sales are good on it, but they're not as good as for the (Sony) PlayStation," Jones said. "People are not as convinced that it's a good product yet, so they're kind of reluctant to buy it."

The Dreamcast retails for \$199.99, while both Sony and Nintendo recently cut system prices to under \$100.

More than 600 games are available for the PlayStation. The N64 has about 165. Sega promises to have about 20 Dreamcast games on the market by Christmas, priced at about \$50 each.

Sega was at the top of its game in the early 1990s with the Genesis console. But replacement Saturn, launched in 1995, was a turkey, and the Tokyo-based company now has a measly 1 percent of the U.S. video-game market.

Sega is spending \$100 million to market and advertise Dreamcast, focusing on its fabulous graphics and power. The 128-bit microprocessor is four times as powerful as PlayStation and twice as fast as the N64.

Dreamcast also is the first console with a modem for Internet access. When the network is in place starting next year, you'll be able to play other gamers online.

Some gamers seemed happy to spend half the night for a crack at one of the new consoles.

At Software Etc. in San Jose, Calif., as many as 500 systems sold overnight, said senior salesman Matt Lee.

About 1,500 people lined up outside the store early Thursday. Among them was Ryan Ontiveros, 15, who pitched a tent outside the store.

"I wanted to be the first one to get the system," he said excitedly. "It's the best."

Sony May Have To Delay PlayStation Successor

Sony Corp may have to push back the launch of the successor to its PlayStation game console into next year, widening the headstart of rival Sega whose latest Dreamcast machine hits the U.S. market Thursday, analysts say.

They said Sony and semiconductor partner Toshiba are working on trying to churn out super-fast chips for the new video game system, which is expected to have 200 times the graphics power of Sony's current PlayStation and 20 times the power of Sega's Dreamcast.

“The production of new chips is a challenge for Sony, which is inexperienced in graphic chips,” said Takashi Mimura, analyst at Societe Generale. “In either case, I’d say Sony’s target of selling two million new PlayStations by the end of next March is ambitious. Sales won’t reach even half of that.”

Analysts expect Sony to either put off the early December launch to late January or March or go ahead with a small volume, supplying the market with about 200,000 to 300,000 PlayStations.

Sony, which announced the machine in March, plans to disclose details on pricing, availability, software titles and the name of the new system, now referred to as PlayStation II, before a big Tokyo gaming show on September 13.

Analysts expect the new machine to retail for around 39,800 yen (\$360), with the price dropping to around 25,000 yen in the autumn.

The market is closely watching the launch date to predict the future course of the videogame war.

Masahiro Ono, analyst at Warburg Dillon Read, said the best scenario for Sony is to release one million new PlayStations in early December.

“The market won’t be elated if Sony says it will sell 500,000 units in late January,” Ono said.

Sony will be the second company to enter the speedy 128-bit game machine era, following Sega Enterprise’s Dreamcast due to hit the U.S. market Thursday.

Nintendo plans to sell its new-generation machine, dubbed the “Dolphin,” in time for the 2000 Christmas shopping season.

Sony’s forthcoming machine has drawn the keenest attention from programmers and artists who have seen prototypes.

They expect the new game’s main chip and special graphic chip to allow much more life-like image quality.

The new system will also be “backwards compatible,” so that all current Sony games will be able to run on it.

Analysts said Sony’s possible delay would temporarily bolster Sega, which is plotting a comeback with Dreamcast, the first game console capable of logging on to the Internet after its last video game system, the Sega Saturn, flopped.

Still, most expect top-ranked Sony and number two Nintendo will eventually fight a two-way race in the 128-bit field.

Analysts believe Sony will stay on top, but see room for Nintendo to gain market share by selling a large array of cheaper, easy-to-develop software.

“There is no reason to expect Nintendo will lose ground,” said Takashi Oya, analyst at Deutsche Securities.

Nintendo has never launched its video game systems on schedule and Oya expects Dolphin’s launch to be delayed by about six months, to around

mid-2001.

Nintendo has allied with the world's biggest consumer electronics maker, Matsushita Electric Industrial, which will manufacture the console using its digital video disc technology.

Sony expects its profits to decline in the current business year partly due to a slowdown in sales of the original PlayStation console, which generates nearly 40 percent of Sony's consolidated operating profits.

Analysts expect a boost in earnings from the debut of the PlayStation II won't felt until the summer of 2000.

Sony shares ended down 40 yen or 0.28 percent at 14,310 Wednesday. (\$1-111 yen)

Imagine Media's Next Generation Magazine Reveals That Microsoft Will Introduce Set-Top Games Console

The October issue of Next Generation magazine includes a worldwide exclusive on Microsoft's "X-Box."

While Microsoft representatives have explicitly denied it, several sources close to the company have told Next Generation editors that Microsoft is, in fact, developing a set-top game-playing console under the code name X-Box.

"According to our sources, work has been proceeding on the console for several months, but it has been kept under wraps to avoid damaging the company's relationship with Sega during Dreamcast's launch phase," states Tom Russo, senior editor of Next Generation.

There is no word on whether or not Microsoft would market the box as a game console or as a do-everything set-top box a la 3DO's Multiplayer(TM) or Philips CD-i, but Next Generation's sources believe it to be primarily a games console.

"This is the kind of story that Next Generation's readers have come to expect. It's cutting edge, in-depth and focused on the next generation of gaming. We were the first to bring news and analysis of PlayStation, PlayStation 2, Dreamcast, Game Boy Color and now, X-Box. For over five years, the industry has trusted Next Generation to deliver the best games coverage on the planet. And this latest scoop proves that we'll be doing it for a long time to come," said Chris Charla, Next Generation's editor-in-chief.

The October issue of Next Generation hits newsstands on Sept. 21.

Highly Anticipated SQUARESOFT Title FINAL FANTASY VIII Ships for the PlayStation Game Console

Square Electronic Arts(SM) L.L.C. announced the release of FINAL FANTASY VIII for the PlayStation game console.

FINAL FANTASY VIII is the latest title in the award-winning FINAL FANTASY series, a product line that is heralded by the industry as the benchmark for all role playing games (RPGs). To date, the popular franchise has sold over 25 million units worldwide, making the series one of the top-selling video game franchises in the history of the interactive entertainment industry.

“It is always a thrill for Square to bring a new FINAL FANTASY game to market,” said Jun Iwasaki, president of Square Electronic Arts. “Our highly talented development team continues to raise the bar in terms of graphics and gameplay in the FINAL FANTASY series. The technological advancements in FINAL FANTASY VIII particularly in the areas of character facial expressions and the seamless transition from gameplay to full motion video and back to gameplay are absolutely stunning.”

FINAL FANTASY VIII features a compelling story, a mix of action and adventure with an added touch of romance. Squall is a member of an elite combat team engaged in a power struggle with another faction; both are battling to take control. The key question for Squall and his team is whom to trust? Adding to this completely new FINAL FANTASY story line are intriguing characters such as the free spirited young woman, Rinoa Heartilly, the sorceress Edea, Quistis Trepe, the instructor, and Squall’s archrival, Seifer.

In addition to a riveting storyline, Square’s development team has ratcheted up the graphics in this game, with more finely shaped characters that sport detailed expressions and facial movements, and full motion videos that use motion capture technology for more realistic human movements and actions. The title also includes an enhanced magic system for longer, more in-depth gameplay.

Midway’s Mortal Kombat-R- Gold Is Ready For Action

Mortal Kombat Gold, the latest edition in the highly successful Mortal Kombat series, is punching and kicking its way onto the Sega Dreamcast system.

Midway Home Entertainment Inc., one of the industry’s leading video game publishers and developers, today shipped the Dreamcast version of Mortal Kombat Gold to retail.

“The power of Sega Dreamcast has allowed us to develop the arcade-perfect Mortal Kombat Gold for the consumer market,” said Paula Cook, director of marketing at Midway Home Entertainment. “Mortal Kombat is one of the most famous and successful fighting franchises ever, and we are excited to help usher in the Sega Dreamcast with this exclusive edition.”

Mortal Kombat Gold provides gamers with an action-packed fighting game with superior 3-D graphics. Mortal Kombat Gold’s fight-to-the-finish slug-fest features twenty controllable characters including a handful of classic kombatants that are making their way back to the Mortal Kombat scene. Cyrax, Mileena, Kitana, Baraka and Kung Lao are all returning in full 3-D splendor. Each character sports their unique bone-crushing Fatalities along with a host of special moves.

The game’s characters feature 3,000 polygons per second, preserving the Mortal Kombat 4 coin-op version’s scorching video speed of 60 frames per

second. A total of four nostalgic backgrounds return to accompany these characters as they compete against each other for the Mortal Kombat crown. All these factors combine to give players an extremely detailed and realistic fighting experience.

Highly Anticipated Action-Adventure, Blue Stinger Launches Day-And-Date With Sega Dreamcast System

Zero hour: 9-9-99. Gamers prepare to experience an adrenaline inducing spine-tingling journey when Activision, Inc. releases Blue Stinger, the first action-adventure game for the Sega Dreamcast. Delivering a unique combination of heart-pounding action and chilling adventure, Blue Stinger will be available at more than 10,000 retail outlets throughout the United States and Canada and will carry a suggested retail price of \$49.95.

"We are very excited to have Blue Stinger included as one of the handful of titles that will launch day-and-date with the new Sega Dreamcast console system," said Mitch Lasky, executive vice president, Activision Studios. "The game, significantly enhanced from the Japanese version, takes full advantage of the Dreamcast's advanced graphics capabilities, and is the only action-adventure game launching with the new platform."

Set on the tropical shores of the mysterious Dinosaur Island, Blue Stinger challenges players to unravel the strange events behind the disappearance of the island's inhabitants and the nature of the enigmatic Kimra Biotech Corporation. As Eliot Ballade, an elite member of ESER (Emergency Sea Evacuation and Rescue), players must use a combination of brains and brawn to conquer and eliminate the genetic mutations that have taken over the island and expose the terrible truth of Kimra's past and present.

With the ability to switch between two unique characters on the fly, gamers assume the roles of Eliot Ballade and his salty sidekick Dogs Bower, a former heavy weapons expert. Using a combination of hand-to-hand combat -- ranging from uppercuts to roundhouse kicks and drop kicks -- and an arsenal of 22 weapons -- including super bazookas, plasma guns, ray swords and acid blasters -- players traverse through more than 230 unique real-time rendered locations filled with mutant enemies.

As players swim, climb, crawl, drive and jump their way through seven unique and fully explorable environments, they must confront over 51 unique sci-fi horror monsters and gargantuan bosses, each with their own moves, attacks and multi-level AI. Additionally, the action-packed gameplay is laced with dozens of puzzles and secrets that challenge players to utilize over 70 objects found in the environment to confront the forces of ultimate evil and solve the mysteries of Dinosaur Island. Stunning cut-scenes and cinematic sound score enhance the game's intrigue.

Infogrames North America Gets Expendable With Sega Dreamcast

Infogrames North America Wednesday announced the shipment of Expendable for the launch of Sega's new next-generation console, Dreamcast. Using the advanced technology of the Dreamcast system, the 80's reminiscent, nonstop action thriller, brings heart-pumping, adrenaline-filled combat to today's hardcore gamers.

Expendable brings a cloned space marine that is dropped into unfamiliar territory to life. On a timed mission to fight and eradicate hundreds of unknown life forms, you must terminate enemies that have destroyed the population of your world. In the midst of this non-stop battle to the death, you must never forget that you are Expendable.

“Expendable is Infogrames’ gift to the serious gamer who has been waiting for a non-stop action/adventure blast-fest,” says Greg Sarraill, product marketing manager for Infogrames North America’s I-Motion Studio. “Expendable is the perfect game for the Dreamcast technology, as this game looks nothing short of spectacular.”

As the battle progresses, gamers have the ability to fire over 15 forbidding weapons while journeying through a spectacular 3D environment. In addition to the technologically advanced graphics, dramatic lighting effects enhance the already suspenseful scenes. Other key features include cutting edge 3D graphics, over 20 levels of action combat, 2-player simultaneous co-operative mode, direct sound and EAX support.

Developed by Rage Software, the estimated street price for Expendable is \$49.99 and can be found in all major retail outlets including Walmart, Babbages, Electronics Boutique, CompUSA, Target and others.

Midway Releases Hydro Thunder For Sega Dreamcast

Midway Home Entertainment Inc. Wednesday announced it has shipped Hydro Thunder, the ultra-realistic boat racing video game, for the Sega Dreamcast system. The adrenaline pumping 3D game will race its way to Nintendo 64 and PlayStation game console in the spring of 2000. The Hydro Thunder marketing campaign includes print ads in consumer and gaming magazines, online advertising, and in-store promotions.

“Gamers have been eagerly awaiting the home versions of Hydro Thunder since the coin-op version debuted successfully earlier this year,” said Paula Cook, director of marketing at Midway Home Entertainment. “The home version takes all the spectacular elements that made the arcade game a smash hit and allows gamers to experience the same stomach-jolting high-speed racing action at home.”

Hydro Thunder challenges players to enter a fast-paced water adventure as members of the Hydro Thunder Racing Association (H.T.R.A.). Players join this organization of racing renegades in a quest to speed through 11 unique and visually stunning aquatic tracks. Each track is loaded with secret paths, ramps, hidden power-ups, special boat moves and a variety of other challenges. Gamers ride the waves on 13 different high-performance boats ranging from V-hulls to high-concept prototypes, each offering distinct handling characteristics. Racers encounter water conditions including rolling waves, stormy swells, glassy lakes, waterfalls and flowing flumes.

In Hydro Thunder, game physics are used to emulate the unique feel and realism of high speed racing boats. As a result, gamers can feel their stomachs churn as their boats react to vicious 3D waves and wild terrain.

NUON Next-Generation DVD Technology

Spyglass Inc. and VM Labs Inc. recently announced an agreement that will help deliver dynamic interactive features to DVD players. VM Labs licensed Spyglass Device Mosaic 3.2, a small footprint, embedded Web browser for use with its NUON technology that is designed for next-generation DVD players. The addition of an easy-to-use browser will enable DVD users to view interactive content written in HTML that is designed by movie production studios to complement digital movies.

NUON has already been endorsed by several of Hollywood's entertainment studios. The embedded technology transform DVD players into interactive multimedia centers. NUON-enhanced DVD titles will allow studios to present their audiences with interactive browsing of movie script & storyboards, information about the cast, and other special movie content, right on the viewer's television. The NUON high-speed media processor, along with its associated firmware and operating system, provide a powerful platform for supporting interactive content, enhanced DVD movies, games, and many other applications.

"With the addition of Spyglass Device Mosaic, our NUON technology will bring user-friendly, interactive DVD into the living room," said Richard Miller, VM Labs CEO. "With NUON, Hollywood studios have the capability of developing creative content to enhance their motion pictures, and bring countless entertainment options to their audiences."

With its inclusion in the NUON development toolkit, Spyglass Device Mosaic enters into a new market. Spyglass Device Mosaic has already been featured in a number of information appliances, including televisions, mobile phones, set-top boxes, and screenphones, among others. The customizable browser supports industry standard HTML and can be extended to include or exclude certain Web browsing features to more accurately meet a device's requirements.

"The new generation of DVD players with NUON technology will deliver interactive options to the living room, eliminating the need to log on to the Internet from your PC," said Anup Murarka, vice president of interactive television solutions. "That ability will bring home entertainment to an entirely new, personal level. The movies you watch will include the option to view details about the story, cast and production. Hollywood studios can also create unique interactive content streams to deliver limitless information to their audiences."

VM Labs predicts that during the year 2000, NUON will become a de-facto standard in DVD players worldwide. Figures provided by DVD Magazine predict sales of DVD players to top 4 million by the end of this year. At the IFA fair in Europe this week, analysts have said they believe DVD will take off in Europe starting with an expected boom in sales during the winter holidays.

Wall Street Journal Reports on PCs vs Consoles

Sony Corp. hopes to drop a bomb on rival makers of video-game systems next year. But in the coming war, the personal computer may take the most collateral damage.

For the first time, video-game machines are expected to decisively trump the performance of general-purpose PCs. As game developers and publishers ponder where to allocate their scarce resources, the power shift could cause a software stampede.

The transition begins a week from today with the planned U.S. launch of Sega Enterprise Ltd.'s Dreamcast console, the first of a new generation of game systems that handle 128 bits of computer data at a time, compared with 32 or 64 bits with previous machines. The more bits, the more realistic the games can be. The two market leaders, Sony and Nintendo Co., have scheduled their own 128-bit systems for fall 2000.

Of all the machines, it is the forthcoming Sony system that has drawn the most oohs and aahs from programmers and artists who have seen prototypes. That system, informally labeled PlayStation 2, has special-purpose circuitry that is expected to allow much more lifelike image quality.

The prototype programs Sony has shown look little like the cartoons or Lego-block characters of current games. Animated people look almost human, with hair blowing in the breeze or their faces vividly reflected in pools of water. When trees sway in the wind, the leaves move about individually, much like in movies.

"The Sony system is going to be so sweet," says Brett Sperry, president of Electronic Arts Inc.'s Westwood Studios division, creator of the popular "Command & Conquer" series of games. "It's now the coolest thing around for programmers."

Adds Bobby Kotick, CEO of Activision Inc. in Santa Monica, Calif., "The Sony console is getting the attention of our PC developers, even the hard-core ones."

Long before the public votes with its wallet on a new game machine, the game developers have to place their bets. With costs rising 30% to 40% for the new generation of games, and development time frames stretching beyond 18 months, the choice of hardware platform is often a make-or-break gamble. Analysts believe that Sega will do well for six months to a year, but No. 1 Sony and No. 2 Nintendo are expected to eventually hold their market positions in the 128-bit field.

Sony announced its machine in March and began distributing prototype systems to developers this month. It will disclose its key game publishing partners Sept. 17.

Ken Kutaragi, chief executive officer of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. in Tokyo, predicted that the machine's performance would top the fastest PCs. He estimated the machine will have 200 times the graphics power of Sony's original PlayStation, and 10 times the power of Sega's machine.

"For the first time, the high-end PC developers have a real choice about where to put their resources," says Phil Harrison, vice president of research and third-party developer support at Sony's U.S. unit.

To be sure, the versatile PC isn't going to die and it often doesn't even compete with game consoles, says Kevin Bachus, a software executive at Microsoft Corp. Online gaming is driving the PC market into innovative areas where the consoles have yet to go, says Jason Rubinstein, games "evangelist" at Intel Corp.

"We're painfully aware we have to make the PC better," Mr. Rubinstein said

at a recent game conference. "But we have a lot of initiatives in place that tell us it's going to be the premiere platform for digital entertainment."

The PC traditionally appeals to older game players, who like strategy games, and to women, who prefer the greater variety of PC titles beyond violent action games. And the PC is getting a shot in the arm from a burst of new sales this year to people who are taking advantage of "free PC" offers. For those reasons, some people think the PC will have enough momentum to retain huge numbers of loyal gamers.

"The impression that the PlayStation 2 will be light years ahead of the PC is really incorrect," says John Carmack, the top programmer at "Quake" developer Id Software Inc. in Mesquite, Texas. "We're going to continue with the PC because it will move ahead of the consoles and it gives us complete freedom to make the kind of games we want."

But console games, which offer a more social experience than PCs, are gaining share. PC entertainment titles made up 34% of the \$6.2 billion in revenue for the game industry in 1998, down from 40% of the market in 1997, according to NPD Group in Port Washington, N.Y.

With all the uncertainty, game publishers are hedging their bets. Interplay Entertainment Inc., Irvine, Calif., says it will make a few Dreamcast titles but it will stay focused on the PC market for about 70% of its revenue. The company contends that PC software tends to grow steadily, where video games are subject to phases of boom and bust.

"For us, the PC is a safe bet," says Brian Fargo, Interplay's chief executive. "That said, it's a very difficult time to figure out where development should be."

Before the PC, Sony must first contend with Sega. That company expects to have 16 games ready Sept. 9, including the long-awaited "Sonic Adventure" title. Peter Moore, vice president of marketing of Sega of America, says Sega is on plan to ship 1.5 million Dreamcast units by March. Once it meets that goal, he says, game developers will have the confidence to commit further resources to Sega. As many as 100 titles are expected by next year, including a game dubbed "Shenmue," which has a budget of \$30 million and is the latest project of Sega's star developer, Yu Suzuki.

Sega's demos show that the Dreamcast is no slouch on cinematic effects, including dazzling sunsets and cherry blossoms blowing in the breeze. Charles Bellfield, a Sega spokesman, also argues that the new design of Sony's machine may make it a challenge to program.

Yet Sega's rivals have built bigger followings among developers. More than 650 games have been released for the PlayStation in the U.S. The Nintendo 64 has 165 titles, with 45 more expected this year; the company is hoping to exploit a few blockbusters, including the forthcoming "Donkey Kong 64."

Electronic Arts, the largest independent game publisher, has yet to support Sega and is instead working on numerous PlayStation 2 titles.

The most ambitious Sony supporter is SquareSoft Corp., a Japanese company that owns the popular Final Fantasy role-playing games. The company spent \$30 million on its Final Fantasy VIII title, which will make its debut on the original PlayStation the same day as the Dreamcast launch. Tomoyuki Takechi, CEO of SquareSoft, predicts his company will spend \$40 million on a Final Fantasy title for the PlayStation 2.

Against such bets, the \$2 million to \$5 million budgets of big PC games look puny.

"We see George Lucas and 'Star Wars' as our competition," says Mr. Takechi.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -      Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Atari Video Club Net Meeting (9/11/99)

The next scheduled Atari Video Club net meeting is this Saturday from 5pm till 9pm(CST), with a break at 7pm till 8pm.

Same three locations:

IRC EFnet Ch #AtariVideoClub
AVC webchat room (link is located on the meeting page of the website)
and on ICQ (my #10451068, if you online I'll ask you if you want to
join in)

Topic: the same two topics (e-zine membership sign up and Atarimania scores will be accepted): added topic continued from last meetings: newsletter changes(*see the poll for what will be discussed)

Dan Iacovelli

Atari Video Club Chairperson
Editor of the Atari Zone Fanzine and E-zine
Webmaster of AVC Online

*can't make the meeting you could still vote at poll site
and don't forget to put a comment why you voted that way.
link to the poll is on the second cover page of the website.

(ICQ #14050168)
AVC online=[Http://www.angelfire.com/ia/AtariVideoClub/AVC.html](http://www.angelfire.com/ia/AtariVideoClub/AVC.html)

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

9-9-99 Could Cause Computer Problems

The Year 2000 computer bug isn't the only date-related problem that could trip up computers across the country in coming months. Just ask Phil White Hawk, a member of a Unity town committee that is preparing for a glitch that could strike on Thursday.

The date 9-9-99 resembles the "9999" that many programmers used as a signal to quit, which means some computers could read the date as a signal to stop running a program, he said.

"We think that 9-9-99 ... is going to be the start of things," said White Hawk, a member of the Unity Year 2000 Preparedness Committee.

It's one of many potential date-related problems in addition to the Year 2000 bug, which could disrupt some computers that misinterpret the digits "00" as the year 1900.

Others include the once-in-a-millennium leap year on Feb. 29, 2000.

"They are all caused by the same thing," said George Markowsky, chairman of the computer science department at the University of Maine: programmers who used shorthand dates like "99" to save computer memory, putting off a problem that is now coming home to roost.

"They made a trade-off and figured that 20 or 30 years from now, they'd deal with it," Markowsky said.

The Unity group has dealt with it by mailing out a list to alert residents about key dates.

"There's several of those that have gone by without much happening," such as the start of Maine's fiscal year on July 1, White Hawk conceded.

"That's really a good sign because it means that business and industry have gone a long way toward rectifying the software part of this," he said.

Thursday's date might not present much of a problem, according to a worker with a Portland company that has been doing Year 2000 remediation.

Six nines, rather than four, have predominantly been used to signal the end of a program, said Rao Addanki, consulting director for CST 2000.

"Four nines is a little less used, but it is a potential problem that people should look at," he said.

Computer Experts Say 9/9/99 Problems A Myth

Stand by for another dud millennium computer bug warning.

Thursday, September 9 may be represented as 9999 on many computer software programs. In theory this string of nines might disrupt systems and provide a preview of the millennium bug chaos predicted when computer clocks click over into the next century at midnight on December 31, 1999.

Many programmers on old computer systems dating mostly from the 1960s used

bunches of nines to instruct a computer program to shut down, or prepare for maintenance.

So the theory is that Thursday, computers will come across a series of nines and grind to a halt, throwing a spanner into the works of a huge range of businesses from banking to electricity generation and car manufacturing.

You can relax, for the next 100-odd days at least.

Experts say there is almost no chance that 9/9/99 will have any impact at all.

“The reality is that 9/9/99 is one of the persistent myths of the year 2000 problem. It’s not quite a unicorn, not quite 100 percent mythical, we’ve only been able to identify two instances of 9/9/99 coding in extremely obscure systems,” said Andy Kyte, analyst with the U.S. information technology research company Gartner Group.

This looks like becoming another example of a warning of computer chaos that fails to materialize.

So far this year trigger-date warnings which turned out be firing blanks have included April 9, 1999 -- the 99th day of the year. January 1, 1999 was supposed to be a danger because many contracts, insurance policies and loans would reach ahead one year and trigger the millennium bug.

Before the Dow Jones Industrial Average burst through 10,000 earlier this year, some experts said computer programs might be unable to handle the fifth digit in 10,000 correctly.

Either the figure generated very little chaos, or companies and organizations did a great job suppressing bad news.

The popular navigation tool, the satellite-based Global Positioning System, reset its computer clock late last month. Although not strictly a Y2K problem, it was heralded as a threat to light planes and yachts. In the event only a few Japanese taxi drivers using computerized maps apparently had any problems.

But Kyte worries that this string of non-events may induce a fatal degree of complacency ahead of a very real problem at midnight on December 31.

“This is not going to cause a significant number of failures or breakdowns. But it may well reinforce the complacency of those that currently should be acting to deal with the real year 2000 issues,” Kyte said.

The year 2000 (Y2K) computer bug problem stems from the once common programmer practice of using only two digits for the year in dates, such as 97 for 1997. There are fears 2000 will confuse computers and microchips embedded in machines, causing them to produce flawed data or crash. Corporations and governments across the world have been spending billions of dollars to fix their computers.

Tim Johnson, consultant at the technology researcher Ovum, agrees that 9/9/99 will turn out to be a damp squib.

But Johnson said there had been computer problems generated by Y2K trigger dates and Y2K system testing. They generated little publicity because of

their diffuse nature, with problems including Swedish customs and passport control hit in Gothenburg, the Bank of Scotland losing its international payments system for a day and Japanese taxi drivers getting lost because of problems contacting the GPS satellite system.

Johnson said that when December 31 arrives, isolated problems are the most likely scenario.

“Complacency is a danger, but a lot of people will be able to say ‘what was the fuss all about?’ I’ll be very surprised if there is a critical mass of events which make people say this a disaster,” Johnson said.

According to Mitul Mehta, Senior European Research Manager at technology consultant Frost & Sullivan, there will be isolated, small scale problems. He expects many big corporations to use September 9 as an opportunity to test their systems against the Y2K threat.

The U.N.-backed International Y2K Cooperation Center, a global clearing house for millennium bug data, is using September 9 to rehearse a plan to track how the world’s anti-millennium bug plans are stacking up. The outfit will update its web site, www.iy2kcc.org, to show the input of 170 or more national Y2K coordinators.

Gartner Group’s Kyte said those looking for explosive evidence of computer failures on 9/9/99, as well as January 1, 2000 are missing the point.

“The majority of errors are going to happen in the few weeks running up to (December 31) and a few weeks after, with gradual inefficiency building up over computer networks.

“This reinforces the fact that year 2000 is not a pyrotechnic event. It’s going to be like putting sand in a Rolls-Royce engine, it isn’t going to explode, just work progressively less efficiently,” Kyte said.

Computers Hum Past Special Date, 9/9/99

Automated systems around the world whirred and purred Thursday past a potential computer glitch tied to the ninth day of the ninth month of a 99th year.

As widely predicted, the “nines problem” shaped up as little more than a fire drill for the much more troublesome technology challenge known as Y2K in 113 days when 2000 dawns.

No significant date-related computer problems were immediately reported anywhere, despite intense monitoring of systems worldwide.

With its four nines, 9/9/99 resembled an old programming convention used to tell some mainframe computers to stop processing data or to carry out special operations such as sorting or grand-totaling.

“We have no reports of any confirmed incidents as a result of the nines,” said Bruce McConnell of the International Y2K Cooperation Center, a clearinghouse funded by the World Bank that seized the day for a dry run of its reporting network.

McConnell, the center’s director, said the worst fallout he had heard of

early Thursday afternoon -- and unconfirmed at that -- involved "a spreadsheet that went down at a college some place."

The State Department, rehearsing its own plan to keep tabs on Y2K events worldwide, pronounced the "nines" blip-free as far as 167 U.S. embassies and consulates were aware.

"While we haven't seen any problems -- nor did we expect them -- it really was an opportune time to test our reporting systems, our analytic capabilities and our ability to communicate the information that we get from these posts," Bonnie Cohen, under secretary for management, told reporters. The department took television crews and reporters on a rare tour of its windowless, 7th-floor operations center to show off its preparations for round-the-clock monitoring of how the world is faring as computer clocks tick over to 2000.

In the operations center, a special 9/9/99 monitoring group sat hunched over 10 computer terminals. Displayed on their screens were color-coded, country-by-country reporting on the local status of power, telecommunications, transport, financial sector, health services and other infrastructure.

"The fact that 9/9/99 was a nonevent is no reason to be complacent," McConnell said in a telephone interview. "Governments must continue to work hard to assure a successful Y2k rollover."

Unlike the nines problem, Jan. 1 is widely expected to usher in problems in automated systems that have not been updated. Previously, many used programs that may not be able to distinguish 2000 from 1900 and could shut down or malfunction.

During a full-scale test overnight, the North American electric power grid sailed through a 2000-related exercise without a hitch, according to an initial report Thursday by system overseers.

The North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC), an industry group charged with ensuring the power grid works, said 400 to 500 utilities and around 1,000 substations and power plants recorded no problems.

Earlier Thursday, first reports from New Zealand and then Australia when Sept. 9 dawned, pointed to a nonevent. The rest of Asia and Europe seemed to follow suit.

Banks and financial services, perhaps the most computerized businesses in the world, reported that systems were running smoothly.

"The only thing I can tell you is that this was basically a non-event," said Bill Mundt of the Global 2000 Coordinating Group on the telephone from Zurich, Switzerland. Global 2000 Coordinating Group represents about 700 banks and financial institutions from around the world.

Experts remained concerned about the potential fallout from other problematic dates, including Jan. 1, 2000, Feb. 29, 2000, and Oct. 10, 2000.

Feb. 29, 2000, might not be included on some computer programs because of confusion over the formula that makes it a once-in-400-years type of leap year. Oct. 10 -- 10/10/2000 -- will be the first eight-digit date in the new century.

In another wrinkle, experts said any glitches related to the "nines" would not necessarily be apparent immediately. Ian Hugo, of a London-based Y2K group Taskforce 2000, said data that should be processed for later use might not be available when needed in affected systems.

First It Was Free PCs, Now Its Free Color Printers

Tektronix Inc., a maker of color printers, said it will announce Wednesday a program to give away color printers to qualified businesses in a move to expand the color printing market.

Tektronix, which is No. 2 to Hewlett-Packard Co. in the color laser printer market, said it adopted the free PC model to the printer market with its own twist -- applicants must agree to maintain a minimum monthly printing volume and they must agree to buy the color ink from Tektronix.

Customers can start applying Wednesday when the Web site goes live, the company said. Applicants must be U.S. businesses, government agencies, schools and universities, non-profit organizations and hospitals and are limited to one printer per customer site.

The color printing division and imaging division of Tektronix, based in Wilsonville, Ore., said it will give away a Phaser 840 color printer, valued at \$2,499, with free shipping, as much black ink as needed and three years of on-site service and support. Tektronix does not develop any black and white printers, focusing only on the color market.

"The catch is we are asking people to buy their ink from us," said James Rise, director of FreeColorPrinters.com. "The thing that was bugging us about the free PC is that there are all these catches," he added, referring to the so-called free PC programs which require customers to buy Internet access for three years in advance or receive advertising on their PC.

Tektronix, by contrast, said it will give customers a chance to send the printer back for free, if they do not like the printer or find that they are not using color enough. It hopes to offset the cost of the color ink with the three year support contract, which is valued at \$4,600.

Tektronix executives said they could not be more specific on how much volume a customer would be required to print, in order to be approved for the printer. They also said that color ink costs range greatly, depending on how much color is used on a printed page.

For example, a five-pack of color ink costs \$172.00 to print about 6,000 copies, with about five percent of the page in color.

"One of our goals is to put them in touch with this technology," Rise said. "It is not to secure revenues from the ink. It is to introduce a lot of people to color printing ... Once people try it (color), they keep using it."

Businesses that want to apply for the free color printer must fill out an application on the Internet, at www.FreeColorPrinters.com. Printer applicants will be notified within 30 days if their company or organization was selected to receive a free color printer.

Totally MAD Delivers 564 Issues

Next time you suspect someone of being an off-planet alien, ask them to identify the most famous saying of Alfred E. Neuman, and if they don't respond "What - me worry?" call the cops.

Neuman, the gap-toothed, freckle-faced, redheaded mascot of MAD Magazine, may not worry, but he and every issue of MAD Magazine from 1952 to 1998 are now available on a set of CD-ROMs called Totally MAD, from Broderbund for PC-compatibles.

MAD Magazine was often the first form of rebellion for now-aging baby boomers; teachers and parents were offended by its twisted, satirical and gross humor. Which was precisely what made it a must-buy in 1959.

But adolescent humor has staying power, and over the years the magazine has managed to remain forever 13 years old. And, the magazine says, it plays to a monthly readership of 1.2 million and is published in more than a dozen international editions.

The seven-CD-ROM set contains 564 issues of the magazine. The user interface, not surprisingly, is a trash heap, created by an opening trash bin sequence. There's a search engine, animated cartoons and audio, as well as a video introduction.

Pumping through the various issues is a bit like leafing through a time capsule assembled by a committee of archivists all a hair off plumb. For those in their 50s, it's a nostalgia trip. For example, a satire of Dr. Ben Casey (hint, children: once a very popular medical drama) has bite only if you can remember when the show wasn't on past your bedtime.

Everything that was in the magazine is on the CD-ROM, including Spy vs. Spy by Antonio Prohias and the "A MAD Look At..." cartoon series by Sergio Aragones.

For all the satirical content, the user interface is nicely done and installation and setup are straightforward. That's to be expected from longtime software house Broderbund, which is now a unit of The Learning Company, which, in turn, is a division of Mattel, Inc. A software archive of warped humor coming from the same corporate parent as Barbie is a situation that probably should be explored in an upcoming issue of the magazine.

All the content is printable, which makes it good fodder for refrigerator cartoons almost guaranteed to offend spouses, grown-up children and other uptight authority figures.

You can get a good idea of what's in store just by reading the system requirements on the software box:

"To run this program properly you should have a computer. (Our technical research shows that a working one is preferred.) Your computer should also have one of those little slide-out 'snack trays.' Take the snack out and put in one of the small round CD-ROM things that are in this package.

"*Windows CD-ROM or NT 4.0 CD-ROM. (Windows with curtains and blinds are optional.)

''*Pentium 90Mhz or higher. (Any slower and you'll be dead by the time you get to reading issue 245.)

''*32 MB RAM, 30 MB hard-disk space, 2 byte soft chewy center.

''*9" shelf storage space for the box.

''*SVGA graphics card and monitor, 256 colors minimum. (Warning: Colors may run if washed.)

''*2x CD-ROM drive. (Use faster CD-ROM if you're in a hurry!)

''*8-bit sound card to hear great audio ruined by your crappy 2-bit computer speakers!

''* Mouse (or IBM-compatible chipmunk).

''OPTIONAL:

''*A chilled beverage.

''*Fuzzy slippers."

The only thing not to like about Totally MAD is the price, a stiff \$69.95. If you're willing to pay it, Broderbund products are widely available at software outlets. If you live miles from anywhere you can also call Broderbund at (888) 829-3343.

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